

# **Assessment of Accessibility to the Beauty Industry for Adults with Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities**

Alexis Clark, Health Administration Trainee

**Research Mentor:** Michael Baca, MHA

## **Background:**

The impact of accessible beauty services and products can be life-altering. The industries of fashion and beauty has historically been noted for inaccessible services, products, and environments for those with disabilities. These inequities have resulted in this population purchasing products online, seeking at-home beauty services, or not participating altogether.

## **Objective:**

This project's initial objective was to establish and develop a collaboration with CDD and Fourth Floor Salon to identify an external training program for cosmetologists to learn how to effectively serve those with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities while promoting comfortability to both the stylists and patients. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the go-live of this collaboration will occur following the dissemination of this research project, so a supplemental literature review was conducted.

This literature review strives to provide a consolidated report to improve and enhance the quality of life for those with neurodevelopmental and related disabilities by:

- Evaluating the accessibility of the beauty and fashion industries in the United States
- Providing best practices to different sectors of the beauty and fashion industries to better serve those with disabilities

## **Method:**

This project encompassed a literature review to evaluate the accessibility of the beauty industry in the United States, identify barriers that these industries face when providing services/goods to this patient population, and provide best practices to different sectors of this industry to better serve those with disabilities.

## **Findings:**

### *Untapped Market*

- Over 67,000,000 adults living with one or more disabilities in the United States
- The following disabilities are included in that count: cognitive, hearing, mobility, vision, self-care, and independent living.
- The prevalence rate equates to 1 in 4 adults (26.7%).
- The total after-tax disposable income for working-age individuals with disabilities is roughly \$49- billion.
- Resulting in a discretionary income of about \$21 billion
- This market segment's discretionary income is larger than the African American and Hispanic populations combined.

- According to the U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy people with disabilities represent the third-largest market segment in the U.S., behind Baby Boomers and the mature market.
- Employing people with disabilities creates a multitude of benefits for businesses as well as society. Some of these benefits include improved productivity, increased innovation, and improved public perception.

## **Recommendations:**

### *Recommended External Training for Fourth Floor Salon*

After much research, it can be assessed that there are inequities throughout the beauty and fashion industries specifically against those with disabilities. One reason for this could be due to a lack of training or resources for professionals working in this industry including but not limited to: cosmetologists, barbers, nail technicians, and estheticians. This lack of training in this industry is directly impacting the lives of many across the United States and was the driving factor for the CDD to determine this was a needed partnership. The recommended external training New Style Training was released in 2022 by Eddie Rivera, the owner of New Style Hair Salon. The course content covers the best techniques, strategies, and interventions to work with those who may have difficulties during their appointment, due to sensory or behavioral needs.

### *Best Practices for Hair Salons*

1. Everyone has the right to have their hair styled as they choose, and a person with a disability is more similar to than different from you.
2. Don't be afraid to ask questions. If an individual's disability has the potential to affect your job performance, then you have the right to ask for accommodation strategies.
3. Ask how a customer would prefer you to rinse their hair. For those that use a wheelchair, they may need to have someone transfer them to a chair by the sink or they may have the capability to tilt their wheelchair with a motor.
4. Patience is much appreciated.
5. Take an occasional break so the individual can reposition themselves if need be.

### *Best Practices for Skin Care Facilities*

1. Invest in basic accessible equipment such as an adjustable height massage table that can lower 17-19 inches off the floor for easy transfer for those who use a wheelchair.
2. Train team members in disability awareness.
  - a. Utilize your local independent living center, as they traditionally have an objective addressing consumer education.
  - b. Competencies you should promote include how to interact with those with specific types of disabilities, disability etiquette, and language. Partner with a local disability advocacy organization and ask for feedback on how to make your facility more accessible.
3. Include accessibility information on your facility's website.
4. If applicable, display the wheelchair symbol by entrances and exits.

**Conclusion:**

This review of literature can be utilized by members of the CDD when taking the initiative with the Fourth Floor Salon live. Additionally, this can serve as a resource to community members when delivering services to those that have neurodevelopmental or related disabilities. Moreover, it is hoped that this review will serve as a useful reference to remind everyone that people should be seen for more than their disability and they want to participate in activities at the same level and with the same regard as the nondisabled.